

THE TIMES

LITERARY SUPPLEMENT

77th Year

26 MAY 1978

3,973

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CLASSIFIED ADVERTISEMENTS

Sotheby's

MONDAY, 5th JUNE
at 10.30 am
at New Bond Street

Printed Books including Books in Hebrew

the property of Captain May of Hayfield (recovered from Delgado Castle), Mrs. Hay of Seaton, D. St. J. and other owners, including Don. Diego, 1549; Skinner, 17th present state of Peru, 1805; Tomblason & Farnside, Picturesque views of the Thames and Medway, 1791; Abrahams, Petrarch's Works, 2 vols., 1768; Aaron Ben Tovi of Apta, Keter Sifon Tov, 1749-55; Chaim ben Moshe Lifshitz, Derech Chayim, 1702; Gons, Nachman Ve'elme, 1743; Luviers, Autour du don Herni Moses Mandel, 1840; Berlin, 1770; Shimon ibn Admor (Rashba), Torat Ha'bayit Ha'kodesh, 1566; Weiser, Chokmot Ha'Lev, 1731; Megillat Esther (scroll of Esther, the story of Purim), manuscript on vellum, hand-coloured, northern Italy, c. 1750; Torah Scroll, manuscript on parchment (early 19th century); Algeu, Zehou Sava, 1863; The Shagadel, 1 of 125 copies on vellum, illustrated by Sayk, 1839; and other Hebrew books and manuscripts of the sixteenth to the eighteenth century.

TUESDAY, 6th JUNE
at 10.30 am and 2.30 pm
at New Bond Street

Autograph Letters and Historical Documents

Including Modern Literature
comprising letters or manuscripts by Burns, Thomas Campbell, de la Mare, De Quincey, Dickens, Drinkwater, Foster, Galsworthy, Robert Graves, Thomas Hardy, Leigh Hunt, Henry James, Kingsley, Kipling, T. E. Lawrence, Longfellow, Macaulay, Montgomery, Morris, Thomas, Moore, Keats, Shelley, Spenser, Walter Scott, Shaw, Tolstoy and Robert Louis Stevenson, James I. and Anne of Denmark, Charles II, James II, George II, III and IV, William, Edward VII, George V, George VI, Edward VIII and Elizabeth II; Maria Curie, Charles Darwin, Edison, Faraday, Florence Nightingale, Galsworthy, Augustus John, Sir Thomas Lawrence, Ruskin and T. S. Eliot; Roosevelt, Diefenbaker, Sir Winston Churchill, Gladstone, Disraeli, Pitt, Parnell, Walpole, Wellington, Nelson, Livingston, Sir George Egerton, R. F. Scott; Blondin, Charles Chaplin, W. G. Grace, Bertrand Russell; Crippen; letters and manuscripts relating to Berkshire, Cambridgeshire, Devon, Durham, Essex, Kent, Hertfordshire, Ireland, Jersey, Kent, Lincolnshire, London, Nottingham, Oxford, Scotland, Somerset, Staffordshire, Surrey, Sussex, Wales, Warwickshire, Wiltshire, and Yorkshire; to Canada, America, West Indies, Spila, Malta, Egypt and Africa, the Middle East, Persia, India and Ceylon, China, Australia, the Arctic and Antarctic, Spain, Sweden, to Carriago, Freemasonry, Herodotus, Smuggling, Hunting, Horse Racing, Cookery, Medicine, Football, Cricket, Theatre, Finance, Trade, Commerce, Parliament and Politics, Female Suffrage, Social History, Domestic Economy, Entertainment, Crime, Forgery, Alchemy, Druidism, Philosophy, Religion, Theology, Engineering, Science, Exploration, Travel, Art, Architecture and Literature; The Seven Years

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Sir Charles Eastlake,
by Kenneth Clark

English light verse,
by Kingsley Amis

Morarji Desai
and his India

Proust: Discoveries
and adaptations

Mark Twain in England;
John Dewey in love

Harrington's politics

R. S. Thomas; William Plomer;
John Gould Fletcher



Edward VII through anglophobic German eyes in 1901: from A Cartoon History of the Monarchy (207pp. Macmillan, £6.95). Michael Wynn Jones's survey of varieties on the theme of 1850-1901 from Elizabeth I to Elizabeth II.

Books in New York:
the impact of Christie's

Fiction: Melvyn Bragg,
Richard Yates,
Natalia Ginzburg

Signals from the periphery

By John Mole

R. S. THOMAS:
Frequencies
52pp. Macmillan. £2.95.

Several years ago, at about the time he published his collection *Him, R. S. Thomas*, gave a broadcast interview in which he stated that he had become obsessed by the possibility of having "conversations or linguistic confrontations with ultimate reality" even as early as 1967, though, in his introduction to *A Choice of George Herbert's Verse*, he was considering whether a "friendship with God" might be possible or desirable for "the inferior country Englishman" allowing for the fact that "friendship is no longer the right way to describe it. The word is now dialogue, encounter, confrontation." What he seemed to be after, with a characteristic readiness to modify his vocabulary, was a "direct method of address, a resonant style for negotiating the Via Negativa, 'that great absence/in our lives, the empty silence/Welsh, the place where we go/Seeking, not in hope to arrive first...' On the evidence of his most recent work, he has undoubtedly achieved it. The poems have become a cumulative succession of brief, intense engagements between need and silence; again and again they attempt an imaginative synthesis of the interior/that call: "the verbal hunger for the thing in itself" and "untensated space" "the darkness between stars".

As for Eliot, whose "vacant interstellar spaces" R. S. Thomas's universe recalls, "each venture is a new beginning" and a central theme of *Frequencies* is the inadequacy and failure of vocabularies. The naming of God is a difficult matter: "My equations fail as my words do. What resources have I other than the emptiness without him of my whole being, a vacuum he may not enter? but the struggle goes on, poem by poem (with titles like "Groping", "Hesitation", "Bravely" and "The Truce"), to find some formula for success, a strategy whereby the unutterable be unobscured. At times it is marked by the bleak patience familiar from Thomas's earlier work, as in "The Empty Church":

Why, then, do I kneel still
stirring my prayers on a stone
heart? Is it in hope one
of them will ignite yet and throw
of someone greater than the shadow
of someone greater than I am?

At others, more militantly, it is a guerrilla attack—the making of "explosives timed to go off in the blandness of the face". One of the chief pilgrims of the poems is the astral pilgrim, beleaguered by silence, for whom "Godhead is the colonization by mind of untensated space" and his frequencies are those on which he picks up "the signals, relayed to me from the periphery I comprehend". Or "I am at the threshold/of the exchanges of the people/of all time, receiving their messages/whether I will or no". He is, as it were, both transmitter and receiver, with God as the code to be cracked—"such a fast, God, always before us and/ learning as we arrive". Although in "The Gap" which *Frequencies* opens, there is the danger (God's nightmare) that mankind's vocabulary will be so impoverished, it doesn't, of course, since there remains, for God

the blank still
by his name of the same
order as the territory
between them...
Nevertheless, by placing the poem at the beginning, R. S. Thomas re-establishes the rules of the game, the grounds on which the continuation of the cosmic hide-and-seek will be conducted. *Frequencies* is to be the latest stage in a chess, but at the same time, "The Gap" foretells the outcome. The Divine Beast will evade capture, and his pursuers will go on hearing the language of silence, the sentence/without end. And indeed, a sentence is what it is to be: it is man who is the captive, trapped between an inner and outer darkness, hungry for shadow on the illumined wall, still waiting for the revelation of "The Film of God" (a poem placed

towards the end) to appear with the "withheld answer to an insoluble problem" but suspecting that there may not be "time on this brief planet for anything other than the mind's failure to explain itself". The last poem of all is "The Pilgrim" in which, predictably, the resolution is a restatement of the question which has been implied throughout the book:

Was the pilgrimage
I made to come to my own
self to learn that in times
like these and for one like me
God will never be plain and
out there, but dark rather and
inexplicable, as though he were in
here?

Frequencies is a profound collection with a beautiful grace and a subtle capability of absorbing its intermittent lapses into portentousness and abstraction. R. S. Thomas's strength has always been in his deployment of metaphor, and when he relies on plain statements of position he can lose the reader. The directness of the grand old duke of York as "Semi-Detached" ("I am neither down here, nor up there, I am where I am...") or the dull and bewildering chipped-up prosody of a language like this from "Perhaps":

To learn to distrust the distrust
of feeling—this has been the next
for the seeker? To suffer himself to
be persuaded he is not
of intentions in being other than
of a receding boundary which did
not exist?

To yield to an unfelt pressure that, in itself, had the character of everything but coercion?

As always there is a suspicion that some of the characteristic neat encapsulations come a trifle too easily ("time's face", the mind's shelf, "the mind's tools" etc., though there are far fewer of them than in the earlier work), and there is also the sermonizing tendency to point out analogies. In "Fishing", for example, although there is some gleaming/insolvency ("the hook in an obscure/grip") it is crushed by an explanatory framework: "Often it seems it is for more than fish that we seek. But these are Thomas's faults to set beside R. S. Thomas's, at his best, to involve his reader, personally, in the riddle of existence. Despite his

Conversation and commitment

By Anne Stevenson

A. ALVAREZ:
Autumn
And Selected Poems 1953-1976
51pp. Macmillan. £3.95.

JEFFREY WAINWRIGHT:
Heart's Desire
50pp. Methuen. Carcanet. £2.50.

MICHAEL BURN:
Open Day and Night
46pp. Chatto and Windus with the Hogarth Press. £2.50.

To review the poems of an eminent critic is a task which business appears to have assigned to A. Alvarez, who set his stamp on a whole generation of poets who were coming into flower in the 1950s and 1960s. As might be expected, in selecting his own poems Alvarez has exercised the strictest eye for good effect, and the result is gratifyingly spare. There are no superfluous poems in *Autumn* to Autumn, and the title sequence of seven poems seems to mark a new departure for the author. A tendency to self-pity and personal confession which, even in this severe selection, makes some of Alvarez's early poems, is here tempered with a delicate, dramatic reticence. He uses conversation to create ambiguity in such a way that the poems urge themselves upon your consciousness without being explicit. But their purpose is clear enough. Did you see its face? she said. What was it, saying? "Gone".

What was it, saying? "Gone".

own use of the word "confrontation", and although he is sometimes ready to start at God "as Job stormed, with the eloquence of the abused heart", his debate with "ultimate reality", which could so easily flounder in abstraction, is infinitely more complex than that:

Face to face? Ah, no
God: such language falsifies
the relation. Not side by side,
nor near you, nor anywhere
in time and space.

and an apt emblem for the subtlety with which an impassioned meaning penetrates the fabric of many of these poems is that of the human mind seen as "a spider spinning its web from its entrails... swinging to and fro over an abyss of blackness". In fact it comes as no surprise to find that this image is a reemployment of one which appeared in a poem, "The Listener in the Corner", from R. S. Thomas's previous volume *The Way of It*. Increasingly, without seeming repetitious in any slack way, his figures appear to be becoming counters manipulated in a passionate game of definition. It is almost as if he were attempting to crack God's code by restricting his own, and it gives these poems a certain whistair-like quality to a minimum of a remarkable and immediate metaphysical intensity.

There remains, of course, the question "where next?" since, in essence, *Frequencies* does not (cannot) go beyond *Laboratories of the Spirit* and *The Way of It* except in the brilliance of its refinement. In the same interview mentioned at the beginning, R. S. Thomas observed:

I think I tend to become obsessed with things. I get into a theme and I suppose work it to bits really... I used to propound on behalf of Welsh Country Life and that sort of thing, and I used to propound on behalf of the Welsh identity; well, now I've wrung that discolority dry.

As yet there is no sign that his current passion is becoming a dry discolourity, but with a poet as important and exciting as R. S. Thomas there is always a particularly keen sense of anticipation. One knows that he will go on asking the same fundamental questions, because he is a writer in the best sense of the word: the shape they take as poetry will still-judging by his present power—hold even greater surprises than when Jago Prytherch vacated the stage for God.



Do it yourself: "The Old Church", an ambitious example of Victorian "rustic work" described here in a "booklet" of "rustic work" (the book is a collection of "rustic work" by Mark Twain, published by Chatto and Windus, 1976, 267pp, £8).

American and English major and minor poets, and a number of other poets, have been included in this collection. The book is a collection of "rustic work" by Mark Twain, published by Chatto and Windus, 1976, 267pp, £8.

The man from Hannibal

By Stanley Weintraub

DENNIS WELLS:
Mark Twain in England
267pp. Chatto and Windus. £8.

Mark Twain recalled that on his first visit to England, in 1872, his enjoyment of the English countryside, as it slipped past his railway carriage from Liverpool to London, was disturbed by his discovery that the passenger opposite him was reading his own *The Innocents Abroad*, for not a smile crossed the face of his travelling companion. "It was a bad beginning, and affected me dismally," he wrote retrospectively. He would repeat the joke, in different forms, both in print and after the numerous dinners at which he was expected to be critical of England and self-disparagingly to call the English "the most gentlemanly people I have met with in this grave land", and defining an Englishman as "a person who does things because they have been done before". But, divided as he was by a number of visits, he would spend years in England, developing, with only a few American exceptions, closer friendships and more rewarding professional associations in London than he ever achieved at home.

The special relationship between Mark Twain and the English audience has been documented before, but Dennis Wells has now opened up the letter-books of Chatto and Windus to enrich the context of that relationship. A number of firms ephemeral and enduring would publish Sam Clemens in London beginning in 1867, for it was the age of fuzzy copyright law and easy piracy. The million or more copies of Mark Twain's works legally published in England during his lifetime may have been exceeded by illicit issues, with the result that he was at some periods in his career more popular abroad than at home. As Mrs Edith Bruce of Ormskirk wrote to him in 1896 when asking for a photograph of the author for her husband, a railway clerk, to whom she gave a Mark Twain book every Christmas, "He is never tired of reading them, and they keep him at home many a time when he would be out at night".

From his first experience of England, Clemens wanted to write a book about it. He never did, although he dictated some impressions thirty-five years later. But in effect that story emerges from his lectures, lectures, after-dinner speeches, reviews of his books, and

his correspondence, much of it with his London publishers. His encounters with England and his changing views of Englishmen and the English character have been examined before, notably in Howard Booth's *Mark Twain and John Bull: The British Connection* (1970). Dennis Wells in *Mark Twain in England* is more concerned with Clemens's relations with his London publishers, and the impact of that relationship upon his published work. The two books, then, overlap little, and in his desire to avoid redundancy, Wells even pads his pages with more than one needs to know about the Chatto, copyright law, piracy, sales statistics, and potted biographies of peripheral figures.

Intrigued by Mark Twain's English reputation came when Chatto and Windus became his regular London publisher and began cultivating his reputation and protecting him from unauthorized piracy. He began to receive more careful editing, and had effective challenges made to publications which purported to represent his writing—such as the penny abridged version of *Tom Sawyer* issued by J. and R. Maxwell of Shoe Lane, certainly one of the curiosities of literature. Meanwhile, English readers and critics were trying to define a tradition of American literature and in the process were recognizing Mark Twain as more than a comic writer. Early press reaction to his lucrative lectures would note his tendency to be dull rather than didactic, one listener coming away feeling that if Mark Twain "ever... chose to say anything, he would say it so marvelously well; but in the art of saying nothing in an hour, he surpasses our most accomplished parliamentary speakers". Eventually it was acknowledged that he had something to say but said it with disarming style and wit. Early criticism as well as English education to the point where he could seriously consider English backgrounds as well as English subjects for his pen.

His masterpiece, *Huckleberry Finn* (1884), may be the best in English that Clemens ever wrote, but he attributed that to its vernacular component. It was not any marked failure on the part of his publisher, he assured Andrew Chitto, but "an undisciplined dialect that modified the sale". Five years later, Clemens expected Chitto to have his most difficult selling task, for *A Connecticut Yankee in the Court of King Arthur* burlesqued a revered segment of British legend. Yet Clemens was anxious about it and asked for no modifications, feeling, Wells suggests, that it was not

an attack upon national character but upon human nature. What its actual reception was like is glossed over; what is clear is that few readers found it a hardship to England which Clemens had intended but which some American critics thought they had perceived.

Hardly an Anglophobe, Mark Twain loved London more than any American city, and lived there for long periods, one of them immediately following the round-the-world lecture tour he had undertaken in the mid-1890s to recoup his fortunes after disastrous investment losses. It was at a house in Tedworth Square that he wrote the book of the journey, titled in

England *More Tramps Abroad* and in America *Following the Equator* and replaced with textual variations between editions which Wells analyses. Whether the "whole raft of reprint matter" that he and Chitto finally excluded was Clemens's padding or a part of his rhetorical strategy is not a debatable matter to Wells. Rather, the evidence of "flagging inspiration or loss of inventive power on Twain's part", the excised anecdotes and quotations—in one case a number of printed pages torn from an Australian book—were "independent verification of his own view of man". Yet Clemens's inspiration was flagging. Family tragedies and financial failures had



Study for a portrait of T. S. Eliot by Wyndham Lewis, 1938: the actual portrait, painted the same year, was rejected by the Royal Academy. This drawing is to be auctioned at Christie's on June 9, among other portraits in the sale is a self-portrait of William Orpen, dated 1938, inscribed "Orsino Boy" and "you're not as young as you were, my lad!"

taken their toll, and he was tired. He would about a shelf-full of books hardly begun, and offer Chitto suggestions for what he thought would be quick bestsellers, one of them a collection of translations of French journalistic pieces on the Dreyfus affair which he intended to preface. Since Dreyfus, he declared, was a martyr to injustice on a scale with Joan of Arc, the result would be "a most killingly readable book". Chitto, who did not sense that his countryman was "sufficiently stirred" by Dreyfus's case, suggested instead "a killingly readable book of your own writing...". But Clemens no longer had the inner resources for a major work, and was content to churn out articles which occasionally could be collected between covers.

So Joan, it should be noted, provides a rare and curious instance of Wells's nodding as a scholar. When Clemens was researching his *Personal Recollections of Joan of Arc* in 1891, Chitto, offering his assistance, recommended the "5 good-sized volumes published in Paris in the years 1841-9 by Quicheray" as providing the "minute contemporary evidence" needed. But adds Wells soberly, Chitto "could not trace an English translation of Quicheray". None existed, nor did "Quicheray". In 1899 a wealthy barrister and amateur historian, T. Douglas Murray, would rectify the matter, commissioning an English translation of the trial and rehabilitation records which Jules Quicheray had published. Attempting to capitalize on the commercial success of Mark Twain's own book, published in 1896, he asked Clemens for an introduction. After receiving it, Murray spent a year anglicizing (in red ink) the prose and punctuation, making the diction more elegant and less like Mark Twain. Clemens angrily withdrew his text, calling Murray a "literary language". In 1902 Murray published the transcripts under his own name. It was without a Mark Twain preface. (In 1904 Clemens published his original piece as an article. Although the episode appears neither in Wells's study nor in his earlier book, perhaps it merits a place, and in any case it may be useful to lay the ghost of the elusive Quicheray.

With Clemens's last visit, to receive an honorary doctorate from Oxford in 1906, and the summer Andrew Chitto gave in London of his most famous author in the dining room over the firm's offices in St Martin's Lane, Mark Twain in England came to an appropriate end. Whatever the more ambivalent aims Dennis Wells has had in mind, it is the unusually warm and symbiotic publisher-author relationship between Chitto and Clemens that energizes as the book's fulcrum. Chitto and his house had provided Clemens with the stability of an established firm to regularize the appearances of his books and guide his productive residencies in his adopted country, and Mark Twain himself had become almost as much an English, as an American, institution.

The Net & the Quest

RALPH GLASSER

Glasser's method has been, first to study the way of life of people at a largely pre-industrial stage, choosing for the purpose S. Giorgio, one of a little group of remote villages in southern Italy. His account of S. Giorgio and its inhabitants... is done with great artistry and sensitivity. One really gets to know the village character and their relationship with one another, and to have the authentic feel of their daily lives. He then proceeds to consider why some have migrated while others have stayed... Finally, Glasser adumbrates a new social strategy to carry the trends he detected: *Malcolm Muggeridge, The Times Literary Supplement*. "Mindlight may reveal this book as one of the most powerful voices in the emerging stream of criticism against established development theory," Russell King, *Geographical Magazine*.

temple smith £8.50

Verse wars

By C. H. Sisson

EDMUND S. DE CHASCA:
John Gould Fletcher and Imegian
242pp. Columbia: University of Missouri Press. \$15.50.

It sometimes seems—but it must be a delusion—that in the twentieth century poetry is more written about than read, more spoken than listened to. Then there is that I think may be advanced as the fact that politics have spilled over into literature in some unsuitable ways, one of them being in verse, in this field, as perhaps in any, ought to be considered as peripheral to works. Among literary movements, Imagism has a place of honour, and rightly, for it marks a definable step in the development of the technique of verse. Yet all the tumult apart, the verse of the movement and the work of its durable importance is the work of several of its poets, because of the limited perspective required by Mr. de Chasca's subject, are ignored by him. Europe's Two Frontiers (1930) does not even get mentioned in the bibliography. These prose works are often suggestive; they are too often intelligent and awake, as well as too approximate formulae. *Arkansas* and *John Smith—Also Pocahontas* show an interest in American origins, and the view of Europe of America and the Slav despotism of Russia, the two Frontiers, will still bear reflection upon. Certainly all these works are an important part of the justification of Mr. de Chasca's claim that Fletcher "was a gifted and intelligent man of letters whose work deserves a better fate than it has received". The "story of

poetry, that he writes with a sense of the relativities involved, and can elucidate and praise without excess or gore. Imagism is a book of critical discrimination, as well as of neatness of writing and presentation. It is in several respects a model for a book of this kind. The University of Missouri Press have completed the job of producing it decently, even elegantly.

John Gould Fletcher was a near-contemporary of Pound and Eliot, having been born in 1886 as against their respective 1885 and 1888. He came from Arkansas, about which he wrote a book, as were several of his prose books, because of the limited perspective required by Mr. de Chasca's subject, are ignored by him. Europe's Two Frontiers (1930) does not even get mentioned in the bibliography. These prose works are often suggestive; they are too often intelligent and awake, as well as too approximate formulae. *Arkansas* and *John Smith—Also Pocahontas* show an interest in American origins, and the view of Europe of America and the Slav despotism of Russia, the two Frontiers, will still bear reflection upon. Certainly all these works are an important part of the justification of Mr. de Chasca's claim that Fletcher "was a gifted and intelligent man of letters whose work deserves a better fate than it has received". The "story of

Fletcher's role in the Imagist movement" can at best make half the case.

As regards the verse, which is his subject, Mr. de Chasca, in his introduction, divides the book into two parts. The first is concerned with the evolution of the "movement" and Fletcher's relationships with the various protagonists, and throws considerable light on the wars of Ezra Pound and Amy Lowell, for those who care for such things. The material is well handled, which cannot have been easy with, not only so many characters, but so many different elements of critical theory and social comedy to be given their due weight. Fletcher's own temperamental difficulties, the "moodiness, mistrust of people, and fits of anger" of this well-to-do banker's son, which made him inescapably attach too much importance to the trivialities of literary pushing and backbiting, are well touched. Perhaps, however, when Mr. de Chasca speaks of Fletcher's "willingness to break off a friendship over aesthetic principle" as showing "how seriously men and women took poetry during the American Poetry renaissance" he is ignoring the major ailment which is often a major ingredient in such quarrels.

The occasion in this case was Fletcher's threatening to move out of a boarding-house where he and Conrad Aiken shared their meals because Aiken had expressed negative views about "free verse". Fletcher started pecking but was

talked out of it by further literary explanations. Then we have Amy Lowell, "the most talked about poet in America in 1917"—which surely suggests that one should not pay too much attention to such talk—telling Fletcher: "You are perfectly aware that I have always considered you the poet with the greatest amount of genius living today." Of such stuff are movements made, when they spread beyond the real initiators. It is all instructive comedy.

Mr. de Chasca's book is a study of Pound, in the issue of *Poetry* for January 1933, which set out principles which have a validity far beyond the history of Imagism: To belong to a school does not in the least mean that one writes poetry to a theory. One writes poetry when, where, because, and as one feels like writing it. A poet exists when two or three young men agree, more or less, to call certain things good; when they prefer such of their verses as have certain qualities to such of their verses as do not have them.

The merit of the Imagist work of Pound and Hulme was that it stripped down the bloated language then current to verse so that there was at least a point to start from. Mr. de Chasca's analysis establishes that Fletcher had no role in this basic act of redress. His poems "cultivate not a sharpness of outline, but a richness of sound. His work, characteristically, is kept restrained and severe in tone, but has an exuberant and breathtaking quality."

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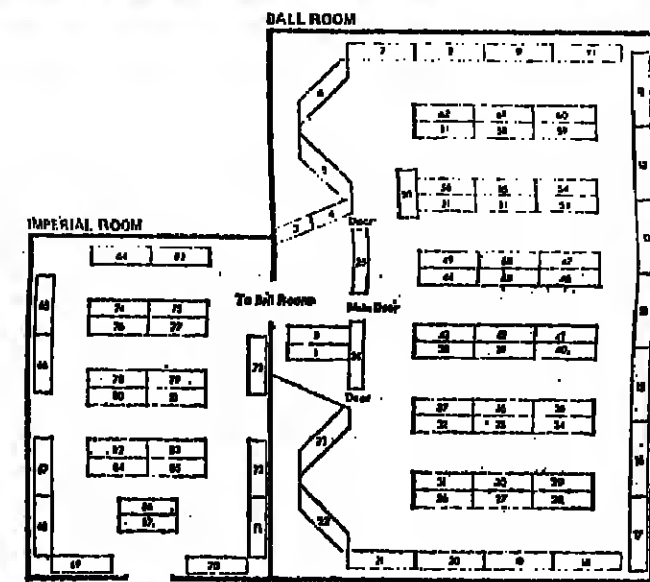
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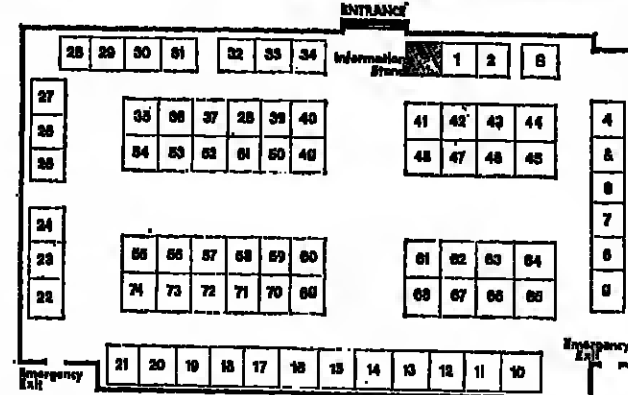
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